

Dedication of the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project Access Bridge (April 25, 2005)

Grundy, Virginia

Today we gather to mark a major milestone in the progress of the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project. With today's dedication ceremony of the new vehicular access bridge, the Town of Grundy can now begin to lay the foundations for the new town on the redevelopment site.

Six months ago, many of us here today gathered to celebrate the transfer of the redevelopment site from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the Town of Grundy. After three years of diligent work, the Corps of Engineers literally moved a mountain and created sufficient flat land for the construction of a new downtown Grundy .

Construction on the new town has not been possible, however, without complete access to the redevelopment site on both the upper and lower portions of the site. With today's celebration marking the completion of the access bridge which will provide critical access from the existing downtown area to the redevelopment site, the time has now arrived for the Town of Grundy to begin its work in developing the site. And so today we mark not just the completion of the bridge but also the paving of the way for the town to begin construction on the site.

The new vehicular access bridge extends 180 feet across the Levisa River to the redevelopment site. The bridge consists of three vehicular lanes and a pedestrian sidewalk and provides the previously mentioned critical access to the redevelopment site's western end. The bridge construction cost totaled approximately \$1.8 million, all of which was financed through a federal appropriation which Congress provided at my request.

Today's celebration is an appropriate occasion to comment on the overall importance of the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project and on the future elements of the project, and I will take the opportunity of these remarks to do so.

First, I would like to note that the overall project is one of the largest federally funded public works undertakings in the history of Southwest Virginia. It is a unique partnership among the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Town of Grundy, each of which bears a share of the cost of financing the project.

When completed, the redevelopment project will breathe a new economic life into the Town of Grundy and Buchanan County. Large new businesses will be constructed on the redevelopment site and investments in existing businesses will be feasible within the existing town. With a flood wall assuring that Grundy will be safe from future flooding, business owners will have the confidence needed to improve their existing structures and expand their business opportunities.

The completion of the new vehicular access bridge clears the way for future elements of the Grundy project:

* The Corps of Engineers is currently awarding a contract for the construction of public water lines on the redevelopment site. The new water lines will extend along the rear portion of the redevelopment site between the two vehicular access bridges and will establish a connection with the existing public water infrastructure already in place in Grundy. Construction is expected to begin on the water line project next month and will be completed during the fall of this year.

* The Town of Grundy is now constructing the public water and wastewater systems to enable business development on the redevelopment site. 4,200 feet of water lines, 4,100 feet of sewer lines and 36 storm drains are being installed throughout the site which will be connected to the existing infrastructure of the Town using connections established by the Corps of Engineers. In addition, the Town is installing 9,600 feet of fiber optic conduit. The conduit will later be used by the Town to hold and protect fiber optic lines. The fiber optic lines will then be used to deploy high speed Internet access and other broadband services throughout the new downtown area. The total cost for the infrastructure development project is \$1,103,700. A federal Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$700,000 is being used to finance the infrastructure project, and VCEDA is providing the remaining \$403,700 necessary for the project.

* The Corps of Engineers is also preparing to begin the bidding process for the first phase of the next major element of the project which is the construction of the ringwall, and the final design plans are being prepared to begin work on this major phase of the project. The ringwall will protect the existing Town of Grundy from future flooding. The Corps expects to award the first phase of the contract in October of this year.

* The Virginia Department of Transportation is currently finalizing design changes on a major expansion and improvement project for Route 460 in the Town of Grundy. As part of the project, the roadway through the existing downtown portion of the Town, stretching from Rife Chevrolet to Poetown, will be expanded into a four-lane divided highway. The new road will be curbed and will feature gutters, sidewalks and streetlights. In addition, the new road will be constructed atop the ringwall levee and above the 1977 flood elevation to prevent flooding of the road.

As this report readily suggests, the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment project is moving rapidly forward. Each year, the United States Congress has honored my requests for the funding needed for the project, including \$9.7 million which has been appropriated to sustain the work of the Corps of Engineers for the current year. This most recent award brings to \$76 million the total federal investment in the Grundy project to date. This year, I am asking Congress to appropriate the funding needed to keep the project on track through fiscal year 2006.

I want to commend each of the three partners who have made the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project a success. The Army Corps of Engineers has performed excellent work in Grundy, and I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership for the project which has been provided by the Huntington District Office of the Corps of Engineers, including its commanding officer, Colonel William Bulen, and Deputy District Engineer Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Johnson. I would like to thank Colonel Bulen, Lieutenant Colonel Johnson and the Corps' outstanding staff for the fine work they are performing on behalf of the Town of Grundy and Buchanan County.

I also want to express my appreciation to Delegate Jackie Stump and State Senator Phillip Puckett for the outstanding support they have both provided to the overall project. Sustaining the project has involved many funding and scheduling challenges involving the Virginia Department of Transportation. Delegate Stump and Senator Puckett have been highly effective in assuring that state funding has continued to flow to the Route 460 project and that VDOT has kept its work in parallel with that of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

I also want to express my admiration for the leadership provided by the officials of the Town of Grundy. Grundy's late Mayor, Willard Owens, was a champion of the Flood Control and Redevelopment project, and the project's success is lasting evidence of his legacy of leadership.

New Mayor Roger Powers, Ed Bunn, Chairman of the Grundy Industrial Development Authority, and Chuck Crabtree, Grundy Town Manager, have also provided exemplary leadership in carrying forward the town's responsibilities.

Appropriately, the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project has received tremendous publicity in national publications and on national network television. It represents the kind of innovation which can be a model for future flood control efforts in which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers participates. As residents of Southwest Virginia, we are all honored by the outstanding favorable national publicity which the project has attracted. The favorable comment is a tribute to the work of all involved, and this morning I want to congratulate the people who have worked so hard in order to make this project a success.